

## **Employee Responsibilities in Preventing Sexual Harassment**

All employees within the USDA are responsible for assisting in the prevention of sexual harassment. Employees should:

- ! Regularly review personal behavior for potentially harassing elements.
- ! Know and support policy on sexual harassment.
- ! Become familiar with employee rights under policy guidelines and laws.
- ! Confront and report incidents of sexual harassment.

All employees of the Agency have the responsibility of monitoring their behavior. Employees can ask themselves four questions in examining their behavior:

- ! Could this behavior offend or hurt other members of the work group?
- ! Could this behavior be perceived by others as harmful or harassing?
- ! Could this behavior be sending out signals that encourage harassing behavior on the part of others?
- ! Does this behavior contribute to getting the job done or the mission accomplished?

### **Monitoring Personal Behaviors (All Employees)**

*The following are general guidelines to consider when employees consider their personal behaviors and actions:*

- ! Avoid reference to employees' physical appearance.
- ! Avoid comments about sex.
- ! Avoid physical contact.
- ! Be conscious that well-intentioned actions may be misinterpreted, and that personal limits on appropriate behavior vary considerably.
- ! Be aware of the Department's and MRP and the agency's policy on the prevention of sexual harassment, including penalties for engaging in such conduct.
- ! Review your behavior and that of others in the work unit for evidence of inappropriate or illegal conduct.
- ! Be a good role model. Employees tend often to follow the lead of the person at the top, who should show sensitivity in dealing with all types of people.

The following questions may be of assistance when examining personal behaviors:

- ! Would I engage in this behavior if the person I am in a relationship with were here?
- ! Would I want the person I am in a relationship with, my sibling, child or parent subjected to my behavior at his/her place of employment?
- ! Would I engage in this behavior if my supervisor or Division Director were here?
- ! Would I want my behavior to be published in a newspaper?

**Remember, sexual harassment can occur because of the EFFECT of one's behavior. One's INTENT of the behavior may or may not be correlated with the effect.**

**Be especially careful of your behaviors when:**

- ! There is a power difference by position
- ! There is a numerical imbalance between you and other groups  
(by gender, race, age, etc.)

***Notes:***

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